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122 of Haiti at Washington, made for co-operation by all those in the government of whom it was necessary to seek assistance. Mr. Norman Armour, then American Minister to Haiti and now Minister to Canada, was kind enough to interest himself in this study and personally saw to it that its prosecution was facilitated in innumerable ways, while Colonel Vogel, U.S.M.C., then Major General commanding the Garde d'Haiti, was helpful at a number of strategic points, as was his successor, General Calixte. Aid and inspiration were derived from many friendly conversations with the two outstanding students of Haitian folk-life, Dr. Price-Mars and Dr. J. C. Dorsainvil. My indebtedness to the works they have published on the subject is shown by the references to their publications given at the end of this volume, for their researches must be accepted as basic by any serious investigator of Haitian customs. Their cordial advice to a fellow-student constitutes one of the most pleasant memories of this field-work, as does the assistance given me by Professor Camille Lherisson, of the Haitian Medical College, and M. Henry G. Sylvain, Engineer of the Service des Travaux Publiques.

080 In the valley of Mirebalais itself, the friendliness of those with whom it was my privilege to associate is agreeable to recollect; if they are not named here individually, it is because of the wish of many of them to remain anonymous. However, to my friends Général Léonard Cantave, his sister, Mme. Vesta Cantave, M. Léonce Joachim, and M. Galbert Constance, I cannot sufficiently express my appreciation for their co-operativeness, for the geniality with which we held long discussions of interest to us all, and for the weight which their endorsement of this work carried with the members of the community at large. Similarly, and finally, I wish also to record my deep gratitude for the assistance given me by my wife, who not only participated fully in the rigors of field-work, as she has participated in all other field expeditions undertaken in the course of this research program, but

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whose contact with the women of the valley made it possible to obtain information of a kind that would be entirely unavailable to a man working alone. In addition, she has given freely of her knowledge while I was engaged in the preparation of this book; it is only the force of circumstances that prevents it being a collaboration, as reports of our earlier field investigations have been.

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South Woodbury, Vermont

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mark the New Year, the time of harvest, All Saints' Day, or Easter can be given; on the other hand, the accounts of those portions of the agricultural cycle that take place during the rainy season, especially the operations of the important co-operative work-groups, could be followed carefully. In the field of religion, good fortune and a friendly entrée, the harvest of many months spent in field-work among Negro peoples elsewhere, but above all in Guinée — Africa — afforded invitations to a number of private ceremonies that might occur at any season. And the same background, together with the insatiable interest of the Negro in the nature and the functioning of his gods, made for such detailed discussions of native theological concept and philosophical point of view as could not have been bettered no matter what the time of year.

In the field, the procedure followed in earlier investigations was continued; a house was found in the village where it was possible to settle down and quietly observe life as it drifted past the door. A number of acquaintances became habitual visitors, and these, together with those others whose services as interpreters were needed, especially in the early days of the stay when the understanding of Créole and the ability to converse in it were limited, constituted those to whom questions were most frequently put or to whom happenings that had been observed were referred for clarification. Agreement on all points, or any point, in fact, bearing either on belief or ritual observance was by no means invariably found, but soundness of method in the study of culture must recognize that there are no "correct" answers to questions of custom; and that the acceptance of the fact of individual differences of behavior and point of view within the general framework of a given set of traditions is the only valid approach to the realities of human civilization.

Obviously, not all the material presented here is the result of first-hand observation, for much insight can be derived from the method of question and answer when carefully used

- 123 with a native resident of the locality that is being studied. A
124 great deal was observed, but observation is at best a matter of chance, as, for example, in the matter of birth-customs, which were not witnessed because no birth occurred in a family with whom close relations had been established, as against the ritual of death, where information was checked through observation when a death occurred in the family of friends. If observation alone were relied upon for authentic information, no rounded picture of any culture could be achieved much short of a lifetime of effort. It is entirely possible for an ethnographer who is conversant with the outlines of the culture of a given society to check statements made to him against their probability in terms of the inner logic of the culture he is studying; it is even a simpler matter to obtain independent statements concerning the same facet of behavior and to discover whether, allowing for variations within the logic of the culture, a given explanation or description of a certain custom is to be accepted as valid. There is no question that suspicion or misunderstanding of purpose is the cause of the passing on of much misinformation; but it is remarkable how often, if the student knows patience and does not attempt to probe the most secret phases of a culture during the initial period of his stay, a misleading or evasive explanation given in the early days will later be corrected voluntarily as "a mistake."

- 123 Much nonsense has been written about the need for the student of the customs of a people to become a "participant observer" of those customs, by doing what, in common parlance, is termed "going native." This may be feasible among some folk — in the South Seas, perhaps — but let it be stated emphatically that this is neither possible nor of benefit among West African Negroes and their New World Negro descendants. There is no tradition that is more deeply shared among them than that of the importance of valuing individual iden-

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tity in the scheme of things. Implicit in this is a sense of dignity that does not permit a man to escape the dictates set by any caste lines that may be drawn. The ethnographer, again, especially if he be a white man, has what has been called a high degree of social visibility, and any attempt to live according to the canons of native life would forthwith expose him to the thrusts of a deadly weapon in the hands of the Negro, the weapon most destructive of that mutual respect that is the basis for all free and friendly intercourse between two human beings, whatever their race — ridicule. In Negro cultures the white student must be content to remain what he actually is, an observer. He can and must be, if his work is to be of real worth, a sympathetic observer, and given patience, tact, and sincerity, he will form warm friendships among the native folk after he comes to know them well, so that as a friend it will not be denied him to share with them their inner values. It is on this basis that the work reported on in this volume was carried out.

Another aspect of method is implicit in the form in which the field material has been presented in this book. Studies such as this, concerned with a people whose ascertainable past history shows the effect of first-hand, continued contact between two cultures, have in recent years come to be termed *acculturation* studies. Investigations of this sort differ from those of a more conventional type in that they not only recognize and stress the fact that contact between peoples is basic to human life; but on the assumption that all cultures, no matter how remote or primitive, reflect this fact, frankly take as their material the customs of societies where the technology, habits, and beliefs are the result of definitely ascertainable historic contacts. For this approach holds that if a competent analysis is made of the base-line from which the process of change in a given society took its beginnings, and if the effects of the applications of these stimuli are carefully recorded, a more pre-

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